

The World of Letters as Others See It

"Surrender" Books.

BY "surrender" I mean that power a book has over you to make you surrender yourself to it completely. There are plenty of good books that do not have this power. It is also true that many of the books that do have this power are not necessarily novels. The surrender books indeed are in a class by themselves—as I have hinted, a unique class quite apart from anything else in literature. I possess a few of them and I would not part from these books for anything in the world that I can think of. I cannot, however, explain them definitely all at once. I can do so only little by little. If I should attempt to make a complete definition of a surrender book you would immediately begin to qualify it; yet it is quite definite, when you understand the conditions.—By Thomas L. Masson in the *Bookman*

Stevenson and Henley.

THE author who for one brief moment came nearest to interfering seriously with the Stevenson myth was W. E. Henley. In the earliest years of their acquaintance a real sympathy had existed between these two greatly different men. But misunderstandings arose, and as the Stevenson myth developed Henley, the unsuccessful, became more and more estranged from the popular R. L. S., who was now the far famed and highly regarded leader in a large Samoan household. The review that Henley wrote of the Stevenson biography was thus tinged with the spirit of resentment, and coming shortly after the death of a man who had long been his friend, the paper justly incurred the criticism of being in bad taste. But all this does not do away with the fact that Henley bared some truths concerning Stevenson that no one else has since ventured to say with so authoritative a voice.—From "The Stevenson Myth." By George S. Hillman in the *Century*.

Sinclair Lewis and the "Alien Tongue."

SINCLAIR LEWIS himself is a real American—no more European than he is Asiatic. He writes American, and Mr. Cape has added a glossary to his novels. I am not sure that this glossary is necessary. It serves to exaggerate the differences between the English and American languages, and some of the American terms, laboriously translated—such as "bootlegging," "frame house," "grafter," "grouch," "kibosh" and "totty"—are familiar enough here. On the other hand, it is as well to be told that "booze hoisting" is American for drinking, that "doodads" means thingummies—is this English, by the way?—that "flivver" is a cheap motor, that "to hit the hay" means to go to bed, and that "the razz for fair" is American for censure.—By Stanley Dark in *John o' London's Weekly*.

The Author of "Dead Man's Rock."

SOME people expressed surprise ten years ago that the author of "Dead Man's Rock" and other romances which, though excellent were popular, should be elevated into a chair of literature; but at the beginning of his career the prophets would have predicted success for Sir Arthur in scholarship rather than in romantic fiction. He was a notable scholar; took a first in mods. at Oxford, and after obtaining his degree remained as lecturer in classics to his college. His resumption of his first calling has more or less deprived us of a great romancer and a supreme artist in the short story (there are tales in "Noughts and Crosses" that none of his contemporaries has surpassed), but, by way of compensation, it has given us an educationist as learned and democratic as any who preceded him in the Cambridge chair.—From *John o' London's Weekly*.

Famous Heroines.

THERE is no question that Becky Sharp is not derived from Balzac's Lisbeth in "La Cousine Bette," but at what a dis-

tance, when once you think of the greatest of all novelists, who has the fortune to be French, and of Thackeray, who has the fortune (at times the misfortune) of being English. When we think of Becky she startles us by her cynical entrance: she inherits from her parents bad qualities. Her first epigram sums her up. "Revenge may be wicked, but it's natural. I'm no angel." She fascinates Lord Pitt, Rawdon Crawley and Lord Steyne in a way Lisbeth never does. Lisbeth's fascination is that of the evildoer; she is envious, spiteful, malicious, a lying hypocrite; always deliberately bent on having her own way, always for evil purposes: so that she, in her sinister effrontery, causes the ruin of many of the lives she thrives on, feigns to help, deludes; only she never deludes as Valerie Marneffe

does.—From "On English and French Fiction." By Arthur Symonds in *Broom*.

The Introspective Mark Twain.

HE was oppressed with the miseries of the world from time to time. He wrote of the depravities and basenesses and hypocrisies and cruelties that make up civilization. There is for those who choose to look for it a recurring refrain of weariness, exasperation and misery in some of his later works. I think Mr. Paine was right when he attributed this to the burdens of debt and family sorrow, but Mr. Brooks is not satisfied with this. He thinks that there was a deeper source for Mark Twain's melancholy. He was very much interested in such movements as those of Loissette, Kellgren and Mrs. Eddy. He wanted an element of soul

cure in his illnesses. He could not say enough in praise of Christian Science, for its "healing of the spirit," its "gift of buoyant spirits, comfort of mind and freedom from care." There was something gravely amiss with him. He feared solitude. He suffered from remorse which appears to have been often largely groundless.—From "The Correspondence of Claudius Clear" in the *British Weekly*.

Paul Bourget's New Honor.

PAUL BOURGET has just been made "Conservateur" of the Musée de Chantilly. He did not solicit this honor, but the Académie Française found an opportunity to express their admiration for their illustrious confrere and bestowed it on him by a spontaneous and unanimous vote.—By Sergines in *Les Annales*.

Between Ourselves

Just between ourselves, the most interesting bit of gossip to retail to our friends this week is the news that Hendrik Willem Van Loon is so eager that the children of America be happy this Christmas that we have just printed another 25,000 copies of—

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